

Message Text

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TO AMCONSUL HONG KONG

USLO PEKING

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ETRD, CH

SUBJECT:FDA REJECTION OF PRC FROZEN SHRIMP

REFS: (A) HONG KONG 10746

(B) HONG KONG 10592

(C) HONG KONG 10208

1. DEPARTMENT HAS DISCUSSED THIS PROBLEM ON VARIOUS OCCASIONS WITH MURRAY BERGER OF SEABROOK FOODS, DAVID COOKSON OF ICD GROUP, NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR US-CHINA TRADE, AND THE FDA. AMONG THE POSSIBILITIES WHICH ARE BEING CONSIDERED BY THE INDUSTRY ARE: (A) VISIT TO PRC CONSISTING OF INDUSTRY AND POSSIBLY GOVERNMENT TECHNICAL PERSONNEL (ALREADY PROPOSED TENTATIVELY BY BERGER TO PRCLO); (B) RETURN VISIT OF PRC SHRIMP INDUSTRY EXPERTS HERE; (C) MEETING SPONSORED BY NCUSCT IN NEW YORK WITH INDUSTRY REPS AND PRCLO, TO TAKE PLACE AFTER CANTON FAIR; (D) PRE-INSPECTION IN PRC OR HONG KONG BY INDEPENDENT TESTING ORGANIZATION OF FROZEN SHRIMP DESTINED FOR U.S. (THIS WOULD NOT OBVIATE NEED FOR FDA INSPECTION);

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(E) EXPLORING WITH PRC POSSIBILITY OF PEOPLE'S INSURANCE

COMPANY INSURING OR REINSURING SHRIMP SHIPMENTS AGAINST REJECTION (PRC ACCEPTANCE OF D AND E DOES NOT APPEAR VERY LIKELY).

2. MURRAY BERGER PLANS TO BE AT CANTON FAIR BETWEEN NOVEMBER 4-11, AND THIS WOULD APPEAR TO PROVIDE A GOOD OPPORTUNITY--IN ADDITION TO WONG'S EFFORTS--TO DISCUSS THE

MATTER WITH THE CHINESE. BERGER EXPRESSED SOME CONCERN OVER WHETHER HE WOULD BE ABLE TO SEE THE RIGHT PEOPLE; WE INDICATED USLO OFFICERS IN CANTON WOULD DO WHAT THEY COULD TO ASSIST (BERGER, IN ADDITION TO HIS PRIVATE CAPACITY, IS ALSO AN OFFICER IN AN INDUSTRY TRADE ORGANIZATION--THE NATIONAL FISHERIES INSTITUTE).

3. DEPARTMENT HAS POUCHED MATERIALS PREPARED BY FDA TO CONGEN FOR Y. Y. WONG. ON OCTOBER 9, DEPTOFF OFFERED TO PROVIDE A SET TO PRCLC COMMERCIAL OFFICER HUANG WEN-CHUN, WHO WE KNOW IS ACTIVELY CONCERNED WITH THIS PROBLEM, BUT HE DECLINED, INDICATING A PREFERENCE FOR HAVING THE INFORMATION FORWARDED ONLY THROUGH COMMERCIAL CHANNELS.

4. POSTS WILL RECALL THAT THERE WAS CERTAIN AMOUNT OF SCRAMBLING AMONG THE SHRIMP BUYERS AT THE SPRING FAIR TO SEE WHO WOULD BUY WHAT. ALTHOUGH U.S. BUYERS HAVE AN OBVIOUS COMMON INTEREST IN RESOLVING SHRIMP PROBLEM IF POSSIBLE, COMPETITIVE ELEMENT STILL EXISTS AND POSTS SHOULD EXERCISE THE USUAL DISCRETION IN DEALING WITH U.S. FIRMS ON THIS ISSUE.

5. POSTS MAY BE INTERESTED IN FOLLOWING EXCERPTS FROM LETTER DEPARTMENT HAS RECEIVED FROM FDA. FULL TEXT POUCHED:

QUOTE FROM JULY 1, 1974 TO SEPTEMBER 20, 1974, FDA DETAINED BECAUSE OF DECOMPOSITION 210 ENTRIES OF IMPORTED FRESH FROZEN SHRIMP FROM 19 COUNTRIES. OF THIS NUMBER TWENTY-SIX ENTRIES TOTALING 12,187 CARTONS WERE PRODUCT OF PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA.

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WE HAVE DISCUSSED DIRECTLY WITH RESPONSIBLE LABORATORY PERSONNEL AT OUR NEW YORK DISTRICT THE CONDITIONS FOUND DURING EXAMINATIONS OF THE PRC SHRIMP. THE METHOD USED WAS THE ORGANOLEPTIC (SMELL) TEST BY 2 TRAINED ANALYSTS IN ACCORDANCE WITH CURRENT FDA AS WELL AS INDUSTRY PROCEDURE. AN OBSERVATION MADE BY THE FDA ANALYST MAY BE WORTH PASSING ALONG. HE NOTED THAT IN ADDITION TO MUCH SOUND, WHOLESOME SHRIMP, THE LOTS WERE COMINGLED WITH

PORTIONS IN VARIOUS STAGES OF DECOMPOSITION, INDICATING THAT CONSECUTIVE CATCHES MAY HAVE BEEN CONSOLIDATED AND HELD TOO LONG BEFORE PROCESSING. COULD IT BE THAT THEIR SHRIMP BOATS STAY OUT TOO LONG BEFORE COMING IN WITH THEIR CATCH?

WE ARE PREPARED TO ASSIST IN TRAINING PRC PERSONNEL IN SANITARY PROCESSING OF SHRIMP SO THAT IT CAN QUALIFY FOR THE U.S. MARKET. HOWEVER, AT THIS STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT OF THEIR EXPORT SHRIMP INDUSTRY IT MIGHT BE WELL TO CONSIDER HIRING AN EXPERT FROM THE PRIVATE SECTOR TO HELP THE CHINESE. IF YOU WISH TO DISCUSS THIS LATTER COURSE, PLEASE CALL ME AND I WILL BE HAPPY TO MAKE A FEW SUGGESTIONS. UNQUOTE INGERSOLL

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